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1) U.S. switches to tough stance on North Korea's missile launch at UNSC meeting

YOMIURI (Top Play) (Excerpts)
April 7, 2009

(Yoshikazu Shirakawa, New York)

Regarding North Korea's launch of a ballistic missile, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice said on April 5: "A strong message from the United Nations will lead to activating the six-party talks," according to informed sources. In an unofficial meeting of the United Nations Security Council, Rice clarified the Obama administration's stance of not flinching from any threat or provocation, with an eye on a resumption of the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear development problem. Washington's stance supplied a nice tailwind for Japan's call on the UN to adopt a new resolution. But China and Russia remain cautious about a resolution.

Japan's view is that since the launch has constituted a threat to the region and the entire world, the act is a clear violation of

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Security Council Resolution 1718. Based on this view, Japan has been calling for the UNSC to take a new resolution that would seek faithfully implementing existing resolutions. In the meeting, the ambassadors to the UN from Britain and France also share the stance of Japan and the U.S.

2) Government stepping up efforts to get new resolution passed, in reaction to North Korea's missile launch

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
April 7, 2009

The Japanese government is determined to take every possible means to condemn North Korea for its recent launch of a ballistic missile, which that nation called a satellite launch. The government will make utmost efforts to have the UN Security Council adopt a new resolution and also plans to decide on April 10 to tighten its own sanctions.

The government's strong reaction to Pyongyang's missile launch stems not only from the missile's passage over Japan. If the North, which carried out a nuclear test and may possess nuclear missiles in the future, develops technical capabilities through missile launches, Japan in its entirety will be exposed to a serious threat.

North Korea has not responded with a sincere manner to Japan's call for a solution to the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by its agents, stalling Japan-North Korea diplomatic talks. In the wake of the North Korean missile launch, the government expects that strengthened pressure by the international community on the North through the UN may work for Tokyo in dealing with Pyongyang.

In the UN, meetings between Japan and permanent members of the UNSC will be "a main theater of war for the time being," as said by a senior Foreign Ministry official. Japan will step up efforts to have the UN pass a resolution calling for Security Council Resolution 1718, which was adopted after North Korea conducted a nuclear test (in 2006), to be faithfully implemented.

3) North Korean missile: China and Russia stand in way of adopting Security Council resolution

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
April 7, 2009

Junji Tatsuno, New York, and Jun Tabuse

How is the international community going to respond to North Korea's launch of a missile? Discord in the international community has already become evident in the first UN Security Council meeting after the launch. Japan is calling for the adoption of a new resolution, but China and Russia are cautious about such a step. The UNSC is likely to be pressed for a difficult decision.

Japan puts priority on unanimous vote; Political decision possible for compromises

On the evening of April 5, after the missile launch, Prime Minister Taro Aso told his aides: "Japan will come down hard (on North Korea)." The UN Security Council meeting was at the initial stage of each country expressing their official views. There has been no change in Japan's basic policy course of seeking a fresh UN

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resolution. Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura in a press briefing yesterday said: "It is desirable for the UN Security Council, which is responsible for the maintenance of peace and security of the international community, to adopt a resolution."

Even so, Prime Minister Aso expressed a view to the press corps last night to give top priority to the solidarity of the Security Council, saying: "The Security Council must swiftly send a message in one voice. It must avoid sending the wrong message to North Korea. That's the top priority."

In the event China and Russia remain uncompromising, the question is to what extent the United States would work upon the two countries for the adoption of a resolution in collaboration with Japan. It seems quite possible that the option of a unanimous chairman's statement will emerge as a compromise plan.

The prime minister has sensed the reluctance of China and Russia firsthand. After holding summit talks with leaders of other countries on the sidelines of the recent London financial summit, Aso said to his aides: "I sensed different nuances from China and Russia. China seems particularly reluctant (to adopt a resolution)."

Next one week will be crucial

Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone asked on April 5 the foreign ministers of the five permanent UNSC members for cooperation on the phone. Yesterday, he made the same request to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Khiem of Vietnam, a nonpermanent UNSC member, over the phone. Japan is trying to determine the right timing to submit a draft resolution to the UNSC in cooperation with the United States and other countries, while working upon other UNSC members. Japan eyes the adoption of a resolution including phrases recognizing the fact that North Korea violated a 2006 UN resolution and condemning the North for it and steps to enforce the sanctions.

A Japanese diplomatic source thinks the next one week will be crucial. Idling away time under the divided UNSC would end up benefiting North Korea. The question is whether or not Japan can find a settlement line with China and Russia in that time frame.

A source connected with the Japanese government noted: "A chairman's statement that is quite harsh would be better than a resolution that is thin and transparent." In the end, the prime minister might be pressed for a political decision.

Administrative Vice-Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka told a press conference yesterday: "All countries strongly think that the international community must remain united. Japan is well aware of that. But then, unless the United Nations responds to the matter resolutely, trust in the Security Council would diminish."

4) Nakasone asks for Vietnam's cooperation

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

April 7, 2009

Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone yesterday discussed on the phone with Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem of Vietnam, a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council, on their responses to North Korea's recent launch of a Taepodong-2 missile. In the telephone

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conversation, Nakasone asked for Vietnam's cooperation for the adoption of a fresh UN Security Council resolution.

5) Government eyes reduction in ceiling on remittances to North Korea as additional sanction

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)

April 7, 2009

In reaction to North Korea's launch of a ballistic missile, which Pyongyang claimed to be a satellite launch, the government decided yesterday that it will decide in a cabinet meeting on April 10 to take additional economic sanctions against the North. Envisioned new sanctions include measures to tighten regulations on cash taken out and money transfer to North Korea, according to several government sources yesterday. The government will make a final decision after seeing responses by other UN Security Council member countries.

The government eyes such additional sanctions as: (1) Lowering the notifiable amount of money to be transferred to North Korea from 30 million yen and over to 10 million yen and over; and (2) lowering the notifiable amount of cash to be carried out from Japan to that nation from 1 million yen and over to 300,000 yen and over. Japan now bans imports of luxury goods such as beef and products related to weapons of mass destruction, but some are calling for a blanket ban. In the government, though, there is the view that tightened regulations on remittances would be more effective.

In the cabinet meeting on the 10th, the government is expected to decide to extend the existing sanctions - a ban on port calls by North Korean ships and a total ban on imports - for a year, though sanctions have been extended on a six-monthly basis for now. The government will formally adopt the additional sanctions after soliciting public comments based on the Administrative Procedure Law.

6) N. Korean missile fails to separate 2nd stage: Defense Ministry

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)

April 7, 2009

The Defense Ministry analyzed the path of a ballistic missile North Korea launched while calling it a "satellite." The launched missile had its second-stage booster until reaching a point at sea about 2,100 kilometers east of Japan beyond the scope of radar surveillance, sources revealed yesterday. North Korea had designated a sea area situated about 2,150 kilometers east of Japan as a danger zone where the second-stage booster could fall. It has now been confirmed that the missile had the booster just before reaching that danger zone. The Defense Ministry therefore deems that the missile failed to separate the second stage.

According to the Defense Ministry's account, two Maritime Self-Defense Force Aegis-equipped destroyers staged in the Sea of Japan, the Kongo and the Chokai, calculated the launched missile's trajectory. As a result, the Defense Ministry presumed that the first-stage booster would fall into Sea of Japan waters about 280 kilometers off Akita at 11:37 a.m., April 5, which means 5 minutes after the missile launch. The ministry announced that the second stage would land at a point in Pacific waters about 1,270 kilometers east of Japan.

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Based on that calculated data, another MSDF Aegis destroyer on stage in the Pacific Ocean, the Kirishima, tracked the launched missile

with its radar. However, the missile continued to fly beyond the detectable scope of about 2,100 kilometers east of Japan without separating its second-stage booster and disappeared over the horizon. The Defense Ministry again scrutinized the results of radar detection yesterday but could not confirm that the missile had fallen. "Separation failed," said a senior official of the Defense Ministry.

Meanwhile, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) also noted April 5 that the missile failed to separate the second stage, saying the remaining stages (other than the first stage) fell into the Pacific Ocean along with the payload.

7) North Korean missile: Destruction order terminated; Defense Ministry begins withdrawing PAC-3 batteries

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 7, 2009

In the wake of the launch of a Taepodong-2 missile by North Korea, Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada terminated yesterday the order he gave to destroy a launched missile in case it was likely to land in Japan's soil or waters. Although the order was good until April 10, the minister decided to end the alert setup ahead of schedule as there has been no move in the North to launch an additional missile.

In this connection, the Defense Ministry began yesterday withdrawing the PAC-3 ground-to-air guided missiles from Iwate and Akita prefectures and the Tokyo metropolitan area. The government has also closed its Crisis Management Center at the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei).

8) Kadena noise worsens

ASAHI (Page 35) (Abridged)
April 7, 2009

The frequency of noise around the U.S. Kadena Air Base, straddling the town of Kadena and other municipalities in Okinawa Prefecture, hit 39,357 times in fiscal 2008, an all-time high over the past five years, according to findings from Kadena Town's monitoring readouts. In May 2006, Japan and the United States reached an intergovernmental agreement over the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. Under this agreement, some of Kadena-based fighter jets' flight training missions have been transferred to Air Self-Defense Force bases in mainland prefectures. However, the data shows that their training transferal has not alleviated the burden of base-hosting localities in the island prefecture.

Kadena Town has set noise monitoring devices in the vicinity of Kadena Air Base to check the frequency of noise over 70 decibels that is unpleasant to humans. In fiscal 2008 (April last year through March this year), the frequency of noise was about 7,000 times more than 32,549 times in the preceding fiscal year and marked the third largest number of times since the town started monitoring noise at the same locations in 1998, following FY2002 (40,175 times) and FY2003 (41,245 times) when the U.S. military activated its operations for the Afghan attack and the Iraq war.

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In particular, this year's January-March period recorded 11,846 times (3,948 times per month on average), showing an increase of 30 PERCENT over last year's April-December period (3,057 times per month on average). In January, 12 F-22 stealth fighter jets arrived at Kadena Air Base from the U.S. mainland for a temporary deployment of three months. The town presumes that the increased frequency of noise is attributable to their training flights with F-15 fighter jets and other Kadena-based aircrafts.

9) MSDF destroyer makes port call in Djibouti

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
April 7, 2009

Kenji Kato, Djibouti

The Sazanami, a Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer tasked with an antipiracy mission in waters off the eastern African coast of Somalia, made a port call in Djibouti on April 6 for fuel and food supply. Another MSDF destroyer, the Samidare, entered port in Djibouti on April 5. The two MSDF destroyers, which started convoying Japanese-registered and Japan-linked merchant ships on March 30, entered port in a coastal country for the first time. Koji Goto, 50, commander of MSDF Escort Division 4, commands the antipiracy mission. "We received 'thank you' mails from all the ships and our escort is encouraging their crew," Goto told reporters.

The two MSDF destroyers have so far escorted a total of 10 commercial ships in three shuttles, running about 900 kilometers between waters off the coast of Salalah, Oman and waters off the coast of Djibouti. On April 4, there was a radio message from a nearby tanker that was being tailed by four suspicious boats, and the Sazanami was dispatched there under the Mariners Law's Article 14 that stipulates rescue operations for missing or distressed ships. "There was nothing wrong in particular," Goto said.

10) Ozawa to meet with McCain on April 10

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 7, 2009

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Ichiro Ozawa will meet with members of the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, including John McCain, at party headquarters on April 10, a senior DPJ lawmaker said yesterday. The meeting, requested by the U.S. side, will also be attended by Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama. In the wake of the launch of a Taepodong-2 missile by North Korea, they are expected to exchange views on security affairs and other matters.

11) Prime minister orders fiscal spending topping 10 trillion yen under fiscal 2009 extra budget

ASAHI (Top Play) (Full)
April 7, 2009

In connection with a new set of economic stimulus measures, which the government and the ruling parties are now looking into, Prime Minister Aso on April 6 ordered Finance Minister Yosano to compile a fiscal 2009 budget that will involve spending more than 2 PERCENT of the gross domestic product (GDP: approximately 500 trillion yen). The amount will likely be covered at government expense. The size

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will be the largest ever, topping the fiscal 1998 third extra budget (7.6 trillion yen) compiled during the Obuchi cabinet.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Geithner at the meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors of the Group of 20 Nations (G-20) had called on industrialized countries to set 2 PERCENT of GDP as a numerical target in adopting economic stimulus measures. Japan can achieve that goal with an additional spending of 3 trillion yen or so, combined with the fiscal 2009 initial budget. The prime minister has, however, ordered expenditures over 10 trillion yen in the fiscal 2009 extra budget alone.

Citing the reasons for such an order, the prime minister told reporters, "A decline in the outlook for the growth of the Japanese economy is the largest among industrialized countries. Another reason is for the sake of international cooperation. An agreement was reached at the London summit (G-20) that all participating countries increase fiscal spending."

As priority items to be incorporated in the extra budget, the prime minister gave Yosano the following five: (1) creation of a new safety network for nonpermanent workers; (2) measures to help companies manage their cash flows, using government-affiliated financial institutions; (3) drastic dissemination of solar energy generation; (4) eliminating public anxieties over nursing-care and medical services; and (5) assistance to local governments to

revitalize local regions. He also indicated three key principles starting with "T," namely "targeted" spending, "timely" measures and "temporary" outlays. He thus made it clear that the package this time is a time-limited measure to be implemented until the economy recovers.

Regarding the timing to submit the extra budget, the prime minister during an LDP executive meeting held after he gave the order to Yosano instructed, "I would also like the party to make efforts in the run-up to the Golden Week consecutive holidays." Yosano told reporters that he was aiming at finalizing a new stimulus package, including the extra budget, by the 10th.

12) DPJ President Ozawa today marks three years in office

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
April 7, 2009

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Ichiro Ozawa marks today his third year in office. He enjoyed smooth sailing until his secretary was indicted over the alleged illegal donation scandal involving Nishimatsu Construction Co., but he has been in a fix for one month. Although calls for Ozawa stepping down from his party post have now quieted down, whether he will be able to become "a candidate for the next prime minister" remains uncertain.

Since his secretary was arrested on March 3, Ozawa has been busy with the handling of the donation scandal in a Tokyo hotel, by consulting with lawyers and explaining the scandal at press conferences. Therefore, there is a complete change in his election strategy, since he is unable to carry out his nationwide stumping. Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama said: "Whenever problems occurred around the party head, there were always skirmishes. So, party heads were unable to remain in office for a long time" This is one of the reasons why the DPJ is called a patchwork party. Seiji Maehara stepped down from the DPJ president's post in April 2006 over an

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e-mail fiasco, after serving only seven months. Naoto Kan also was forced to quit his party head post in May 2004 over his pension-premium nonpayment issue.

Although Ozawa's decision to continue serving as party leader was approved, some DPJ lawmakers are still calling for his resignation. In public opinion polls by various media companies, a majority of the public is unhappy with Ozawa remaining in his party post. There is a growing wave of public backlash against Ozawa.

Even though, calls for a quick exit by Ozawa have yet to grow stronger in the DPJ. The reason is that Ozawa has implied his intention to resign depending on the situation, while saying that he will take action in order to win the next general election of the House of Representatives. DPJ members consider that it is not time to engage in maneuvering. Ozawa assessed that the DPJ has changed.

Another reason for the DPJ allowing Ozawa to remain in his post is that he has achieved such results over the past three years as victory in the 2007 House of Councillors election. Hatoyama stressed: "The party has become united since Mr. Ozawa became president. Under the Ozawa leadership, we won elections. His grip on the party has strengthened."

However, Jun Azumi, deputy chairman of the DPJ Diet Affairs Committee, said: "Mr. Ozawa ponders the next move for a long time." A senior party member quipped: "In the day of peril, senior members are determined to submit resignations and urge the leader to quit his party post." Calls for Ozawa's resignation are still there in the DPJ.

13) Tokyo Public Prosecutors Office investigation squad questioned Nikai's younger brother

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 25) (Full)
April 7, 2009

It appears that the Tokyo Public Prosecutors Office special

investigation squad questioned Economic, Trade and Industry (METI) Minister Toshihiro Nikai's younger brother (67) and others as reference witnesses over the allegation that Nishimatsu Construction Co., a second-tier construction contractor, offered an office room free of rent for the use by METI Minister Nikai's political organization. Former Nishimatsu Construction President Mikio Kunisawa (70), indicted in charge of violating the Political Fund Control Law, told public prosecutors that he and Nikai's brother created about 10 years ago through consultation a scheme under which Nishimatsu Construction covers the rents paid by the Nikai side with political fund donations. Questioned about such a scheme by public prosecutors, Nikai's brother appeared to have totally denied the allegation, saying, "We have never thought of such a framework. We rented the office and have been paying rents."

According to a source connected to Nishimatsu Construction, Kansai Shinpu-Kai in Osaka City, a political organization managed in effect by Nikai's younger brother, signed a contract with a design company to rent a room in a condominium in Nishi Ward, Osaka City for 2.8 million yen a year. Nikai's brother and Kunisawa around the same time agreed that rents for the office be covered with political funds donations. Nikai's state-fund secretary is said to have taken over that scheme.

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The investigation squad questioned Nikai's younger brother and his state-fund secretary to look into the possibility of building a case against Nikai. His brother totally denied the allegation, noting, "We have never had our rents paid with political funds donations." It appears that the state-fund secretary has also denied the allegation, saying, "I have never inherited such an agreement."

According to the political fund report of the Liberal Democratic Party Wakayama No. 3 Constituency chapter, headed by Nikai, Nishimatsu Construction in 2006 and 2007 donated 3 million yen in each year in the names of 60 employees with each employee paying 50,000. Since it is not necessary to enter donations in political fund reports, if they are less than 50,000 yen, the allegation that Nishimatsu Construction had donated political funds under the guise of individual donations by its employees has surfaced.

14) Three bills to clear Lower House in April

SANKEI (Page 5) (Excerpts)
April 7, 2009

There is a strong probability that a bill related to the establishment of a Consumer Agency, an anti-piracy bill, and a bill revising the National Pension Law, which are key bills in the latter half of the current Diet session, will clear the House of Representatives before the end of April. The reason is because the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which has suffered from the alleged illegal donation scandal involving Nishimatsu Construction Co., is now taking a flexible stance toward consultations on revising the bills. There are awkward relations between the ruling and opposition camps. The Aso cabinet's support rate began to turn up. In order also to create circumstances under which Prime Minister Taro Aso can easily dissolve the Lower House in May, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) intends to speed up the revision talks.

"I wish the Consumer Agency-related bill will be passed in the Lower House this weekend," LDP Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima said in a meeting yesterday of senior members of the ruling parties' Diet affairs committees. Oshima instructed an LDP director of the Lower House Special Committee on Consumer Affairs to reach an early conclusion on the Consumer Agency-related bill by making concessions so that anti-piracy legislation will be dealt with quickly. The ruling and opposition camps have agreed to hold deliberations on the anti-piracy bill on April 14 in the Lower House. The National Pension Law revision bill, which is designed to increase basic pensions borne by the national government to 50 PERCENT , will likely clear the Lower House probably on April 16.

The LDP Diet Affairs Committee had initially expected that since the

DPJ would oppose these two bills, Lower House override votes would be necessary. However, in consideration of the opposition's assertion that the Japan Cost Guard should deal with the anti-piracy legislation, the ruling and opposition blocs are carrying out revision talks behind the scenes on the anti-piracy bill, while the ruling coalition is suggesting the need to establish a new taskforce in the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport, which oversees the JCG. The expectation is that the DPJ will agree to an early vote on the bill revising the National Pension Law.

ZUMWALT